

Health Advisory:
State Health
Department Releases
Alert on Medications
Stolen from Local
Health Facility:
Succinylcholine

October 20, 2006

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov>

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Health Alerts convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

Health Advisories provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

Health Guidances contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

Health Updates provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

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Health Advisory
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SUBJECT: **Succinylcholine**

State Health Department Releases Alert on Medications Stolen from Local Health Facility

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is alerting residents in and around Ripley County of the health risks posed by exposure to medications recently stolen from a health facility in Doniphan.

Among the various drugs stolen were 27 vials of succinylcholine. With effects similar to those of curare, succinylcholine is a strong muscle relaxant used with anesthesia while intubating patients in hospitals. Because this drug paralyzes the muscles responsible for breathing, if can be deadly if misused. The drug is never to be handled or used by anyone who is not a highly trained medical professional and unless artificial respiration and oxygen are present to be administered.

Local police believe that the people who stole these drugs do not know what they have or the danger involved. If a person decides to administer or ingest this drug, the results will most likely be fatal. Succinylcholine usually comes in a vial that is powder and has to be mixed with sterile water. However, it is not known what form the drugs were in at the time of the theft.

Also stolen were blood pressure medicine and tetanus injection medication. The thief or thieves broke into a medication storage unit and removed all of the drugs and also took syringes.

These drugs are not considered controlled substances and are outside the authority of DHSS and the federal Drug Enforcement Agency. However, because the drugs pose a substantial health risk, DHSS is alerting people in the area to the situation.

Anyone with information about the theft or the location of the drugs should contact local law enforcement or medical authorities immediately.

Additional information regarding the drug Succinylcholine is attached on page 2 of this Health Advisory.

Succinylcholine Chloride

Succinylcholine (*suk-sin-ill-coh-leen*) is a powerful muscle relaxant used in combination with anesthetic drugs during surgery. It is marketed and sold under the trade names Anectine™, Quelicin™, and Anectine Flo-Pack.™

The effect of succinylcholine is similar to curare. It is used as a temporary neuromuscular block to produce paralysis. This drug is most commonly used for the intubation of patients prior to receiving anesthesia for surgery and to relax muscles during surgery.

The paralysis usually appears in the eyelids, jaw, limbs, abdominal muscles, respiratory muscles, and diaphragm. The drug is not to be administered unless there is a licensed and authorized medical professional present and skilled in the management of artificial respiration and the establishment of tracheal intubation. There should be an availability of immediate mechanical ventilation and oxygen.

The drug has no effect on consciousness or pain. Depending upon the dosage amount administered, a person taking the drug would be awake but paralyzed and not able to breathe.

Source: “*Central Nervous System Agents, Muscle Relaxants-Adjuncts to Anesthesia—Depolarizing Neuromuscular Blockers*,” Drug Facts and Comparisons. pg. 1065, (St. Louis, Mo.: Wolters Kluwer Health (2006), ™